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AUTHOR Kozlowski, Ken
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ABSTRACT

This study initiated service request sheets, evaluated reference services provided by the staff of the Cleveland Law Library (Cuyahoga County, Ohio) for the time period April-September, 1995. Five thousand and fifty-two questions were included in the study, of which 2,949 were of the type in which reference service was provided. The other 2,103 questions (no reference required) were used to compile complete statistics concerning type of patron served, time spent answering the questions, sources utilized, and dispositions of requests. The ultimate goal of the study was to determine if there were any differences in the way reference service was provided by professionals to paraprofessionals. The questions were also analyzed to determine if "mistakes" had been made. Mistakes were defined as either technical (staff member chose to answer a question without the requisite skills to answer it successfully), judgment (staff member chose a less effective path in answering the question), or system (book off the shelf/not signed out, computer system failure, etc.) It was discovered that professionals work on a smaller number of questions, but take more time to complete the answer. Electronic resources are utilized more frequently by the professional. The number of mistakes were under 12%, which could possibly be reduced with more training. Other results were that smaller firms (those with less than 50 attorneys) used the library more than large firms. Eighty-nine percent of all questions were handled in 30 minutes or less. Books were used only 63.2% of the time to answer questions. Ninety-four percent of questions were answered successfully, either from local sources, interlibrary loan, or referral to an outside verified source. Appendices include the Law Library Service Request forms, sources and research types, and six tables of data. (Author)

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ANALYSIS OF REFERENCE SERVICE AT THE CLEVELAND
LAW LIBRARY, APRIL - SEPTEMBER 1995

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Library Science

by

Ken Kozlowski

December, 1995

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Master's Research Paper by

Ken Kozlowski

B.A., University of Akron, 1985

J.D., Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, 1991

M.L.S., Kent State University, 1995

Approved by

Adviser _____ Date _____

ABSTRACT

This study, using ex post facto data from staff initiated service request sheets, evaluated reference services provided by the staff of the Cleveland Law Library (Cuyahoga County, Ohio) for the time period April - September 1995. Five thousand and fifty-two questions were included in the study, of which 2,949 were of the type in which reference service was provided. The other 2,103 questions (no reference required) were used to compile complete statistics concerning type of patron served, time spent answering the questions, sources utilized, and dispositions of requests. The ultimate goal of the study was to determine if there were any differences in the way reference service was provided by professionals as opposed to paraprofessionals. The questions were also analyzed to determine if "mistakes" had been made. Mistakes were defined as either technical (staff member chose to answer a question without the requisite skills to answer it successfully), judgment (staff member chose a less effective path in answering the question), or system (book off the shelf/not signed out, computer system failure, etc.). It was discovered that professionals work on a smaller number of questions, but take more time to complete the answer. Electronic resources are utilized more frequently by the professional. The number of mistakes were under 12%, which the researcher believed could be reduced with more training. Other results of note were that smaller firms (those with less than fifty attorneys) used the library more than large firms. Eighty-nine percent of all questions were handled in thirty minutes or less. Books were used only 63.2% of the time to answer questions. Ninety-four percent of questions were answered successfully, either from local sources, interlibrary loan, or referral to an outside verified source.

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INTRODUCTION

Need For the Study

A library's reference services are what the public usually considers when deciding if a library is a "good" library. This is especially true when you deal with law libraries, where reliable information often makes the difference between winning or losing a court battle.

In order to have effective reference services, it is essential that you know who your patrons are, and if they are receiving the information they require.

There is an absolute dearth of information on the subject of reference service in Ohio's County Law Libraries. The studies that I've chosen to look at include those that researched the professional v. paraprofessional at the reference desk question, reference service effectiveness, and the impact that newer reference tools such as CD-ROM and the Internet have had on legal reference service. Each of these topics make up a portion of the overall picture I attempted to paint with my study of the Cleveland Law Library's reference service for the time period April 1995 - September 1995.

Background of the Cleveland Law Library

The Cleveland Law Library is a private nonprofit organization which is supported by more than 3,000 dues-paying members. Additional funding is received by way of traffic fine disbursements from the municipalities within Cuyahoga County. The Library's reference staff consists of a Director (JD, MLS), Public Services Librarian (JD, working on MLS), Technical Services Librarian (MLS, performs some reference), Circulation Librarian (MLS), two full-time reference desk assistants, and two part-time reference desk assistants. The reference assistants

have varying degrees of legal experience, ranging from zero to having a paralegal degree.

Purpose of the Study

The main question that I sought to answer was: Is there any appreciable differences in the responses to questions when they are answered by either paraprofessionals or professional librarians? The library needs to have a quantifiable handle on who is answering what questions, and the errors made by which type of staff members. Other factors looked at were the amount of time taken to answer a question, if both the professional and the paraprofessional worked on the question together, and if professionals were working on questions that should have been handled by paraprofessionals, or vice versa.

An ancillary result of this analysis was the recording of what type of sources were being used to answer a question or deliver a document. This information will be used for the purposes of staffing or collection development.

Initial Hypotheses

Based on personal observations from three years of working at the Cleveland Law Library, I believed the following to be true:

1. Twenty to thirty percent of questions are of such a nature that they should

be handled exclusively by professional staff, perhaps only by the librarians who also possess JDs.

2. An additional 30% will require some type of professional staff intervention in order to disseminate correct information.

3. Thirty percent of the questions will be disposed of by using other media aside from the traditional "book".

4. In only 5% or less of the questions will an answer of "NO" be given without a referral to another source.

5. Although the larger law firms (50+ attorneys) have their own libraries in-house, they will still constitute better than 50% of the questions.

Definition of Terms

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|--|
| 1. | professional - | staff member with an MLS who has the title of librarian. |
| 2. | paraprofessional - | staff member without an MLS who has significant patron contact and works on reference questions. |
| 3. | technical mistake - | a staff member has chosen to answer a question without the requisite skills or knowledge to find the answer successfully. Three years of daily observation of the staff member will enter into the determination of whether the staff member has attempted to answer a question which is beyond his/her experience and training. |
| 4. | judgment mistake - | a staff member has the skills to answer the question |

successfully, but has chosen a less effective strategy to arrive at the answer. This will be determined by looking at the time it took the staff member to answer the question, and the sources employed.

5. system
mistake -

a question cannot be answered due to the failure of a library resource.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of using ex-post facto data is that patron satisfaction was not measured. A percentage was obtained for filled requests along with an error rate, but patron satisfaction can only be measured by conducting a new survey via a questionnaire. That was not done in this study.

Another limitation is that, for the most part, the study applies only to the Cleveland Law Library. Some results or generalizations from this study *may* apply to other County Law Libraries, but that could only be established after additional studies are conducted in other libraries.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Marcia Koslov conducted a study of County Law Libraries in Wisconsin in 1993.¹ Koslov wanted to determine the ability of the libraries to meet the needs of circuit court judges within the state. She looked at the areas of materials availability, accessibility, financial resources, and library use. She used several small surveys to collect the data. Some of her results were very interesting. She established that only two of the seventy libraries had identifiable library staff. The other libraries were managed by clerks or other court personnel, or not managed at all.

Koslov sent a list of 43 titles covering 33 basic needs of a Wisconsin law library. Only five counties could claim ownership of the titles. Another pertinent fact I took away from this study was that of the 55% of the judges who had access to online research tools, only 29% reported actual use. This is probably due to lack of professional staff members within the library, lack of training, or both. Another result of the study which Koslov found disturbing is that when a resource could not be found in the library, 25% of the judges replied that they would do *without* it. Despite these results, and the lack of professional staffing in most of the libraries, a success rate between 76-100% was reported in 71% of the responses.

An earlier study conducted by Lydia Olszak looked at how difficult it is to come up with a success ratio because of the differing notions as to how a reference mistake is defined.² Olszak

1. Marcia J. Koslov, "Wisconsin County Law Libraries: A Court Evaluation Project," *Law Library Journal* 86 (Fall 1994): 707-52.

2. Lydia Olszak, "Mistakes and Failures at the Reference Desk," *RQ* 31 (Fall 1991): 39-49.

surveyed, conducted interviews, and observed at a library associated with a humanities graduate program at a large public research university in the southeastern United States.

Olszak describes mistakes as being either technical, judgment, or normative errors. These definitions are ones that I used in my study to evaluate mistakes. The technical mistake is made when a staff member does not have the required skills to perform the task. This could be the case with more complex questions or perhaps when online skills are necessary. Judgment mistakes occur when the staff member has the technical skill, but chooses a less effective strategy to answer the question. This type of mistake often occurs when the level of the question or the ability of the patron is misdiagnosed.

Olszak also describes the problem of competing goals of staff members. Providing a correct answer may not be the most important goal. The competing goals of instructing patrons or minimizing the time spent on transactions may cause the patrons to believe they are not being helped properly. Staff members may also shift the blame for a mistake to the patron, not realizing it was a failure on their part. This sometimes happens with the patron who wants to be coddled throughout the reference process and is labeled a "problem patron" by the staff. Patrons often will not reveal their true questions. There may also be mistakes due to system failures such as when online services are down.

An interesting study conducted by Jo Bell Whitlach in 1990 used the theory and research findings concerning service organizations to develop a model of the reference process.³ Whitlach determined that there were three classes of variables that effect reference service: 1) technical knowledge of the job, 2) social skills, and 3) system constraints. You will notice that these

3. Jo Bell Whitlack, "Reference Service Effectiveness," *RQ* 30 (Winter 1990): 205-20.

variables dovetail nicely with the Olszak study of mistakes. By using the model, Whitlach determined which variables within the three classes had the most effect on reference effectiveness.

Whitlach surveyed 62 reference librarians in five northern California academic libraries. Users were also asked to participate. Every fifth patron who asked a reference question was asked to participate. She received 257 replies out of 397 attempts for a response rate of 64%. There were seventeen cases of total failure. Eleven of those (64%) were system failures, six (35.3%) were accounted for by researching the variables involved in the reference model. The variables most identified in complete or partial failures were feedback, service orientation, time constraints, and task uncertainty.

Task uncertainty plays a huge role in the reference success rate. In the service organization studies, when the product is produced through heavy client and service provider interaction, task uncertainty is high. In contrast, clients with limited roles, such as a customer at a fast food restaurant, have their uncertainty reduced because of clearly defined choices. Library reference obviously is at the high uncertainty end of the spectrum.

Two additional studies that evaluated the differences in quality of work performed by professional and paraprofessional staff members, and one that looked at the percentage of use of paraprofessionals at the reference desk in Ohio public libraries were also identified.

In the latter study,⁴ Grace Franklin chose to define paraprofessionals as those persons who have patron contact, answer reference questions, but do not have a degree in library science.

4. Grace A. Franklin, "Paraprofessionals at the Reference Desk," *Ohio Libraries* 4 (May/June 1991): 6-9.

This is the definition I used for my study also, because it accurately describes the staff at the Cleveland Law Library. If I was going outside the Cleveland Law Library for my information, that definition may not fit because of the number of law librarians that do not have the MLS. That topic, however, is a sticky one and the proper subject of another research project.

Franklin surveyed 48 libraries with a 70% response rate. She found that 85% of the libraries use paraprofessionals, and 78% of those work independently without professional supervision. The minimum education level is a high school degree, but over 50% of the paraprofessionals in the survey have a college degree, with 12% having post college experience. Twenty percent of the libraries limit paraprofessionals to directional and ready reference. Seventy-one percent conduct extended reference, and 22% conduct online research.

Franklin's conclusion was that more training was needed, especially in reference interviewing. She advocated the creation of an interview form which could be used by the paraprofessionals, and professionals too, for that matter.

Gerald Jahoda and Frank Bonney's survey goal was to develop instructional materials for training paraprofessionals.⁵ They sent their survey to 114 public libraries with a response rate of 80.7%. They wanted to find out the percentage of libraries using paraprofessionals (75%) and when, the minimum educational level (43% high school, 40% college), types of training (19% formal classroom, 96% on-the-job), and the types of queries that paraprofessionals should attempt. This last question was one that interested me.

The single entry, single source type of question was the overwhelming choice of 90% of

5. Gerald Jahoda and Frank Bonney, "The Use of Paraprofessionals in Public Libraries for Answering Reference Questions," *RQ* 29 (Spring 1990): 328-31.

the respondents as the type of question paraprofessionals should be handling. The percentages, however, were fairly high for other types of questions. A score of 56% was found when questions required negotiation because of incompleteness, and when cross references or indexes were involved. The result was 63% when question involved information which may have changed since the source used was published. The lowest scores were received on questions which required negotiation because the answer did not appear to be in the literature (29%) or if judgment was required on how much information to give (30%). The latter example relates back to the error of judgment in misdiagnosing the level of the question or the ability of the patron as discussed in the Olszak study.

Marjorie Murfin and Charles Bunge's study used patron satisfaction as a measure of paraprofessional success in answering questions.⁶ The researchers used a "Reference Transaction Assessment Instrument" which had two parts, one for the patron and one for the staff member. This study consisted of 33 academic libraries in which 20 used both professionals and paraprofessionals. It was a self selected sample with no randomness, and did not claim to be representative of academic libraries as a whole. The transactions numbered 1607, 291 of which were conducted by paraprofessionals. Complete successes were characterized by the phrases, "I received exactly what I wanted," and "I was fully satisfied." The complete success ratios were 50.5% for paraprofessionals (PP), 60.4% for professionals (P). Partial successes were 29.6% for paraprofessionals, 22.8% for professionals. Combined complete and partial success percentages were close, 80.1% for paraprofessionals, 83.2% for professionals. Complete failure rates were

6. Marjorie E. Murfin and Charles A. Bunge, "Paraprofessionals at the Reference Desk," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 14 (March 1988): 10-14.

6.9% for paraprofessionals, 3.4% for professionals. Some of the reasons given for partial failures were that the patron needed more in-depth information (15.5% PP, 9.0% P), or a different viewpoint (3.8% PP, 1.9% P).

Quality of service was also surveyed. Patrons could answer that they did not receive enough help (12.7% PP, 6.8% P), the help was not clear (9.6% PP, 6.2% P), or that the librarian was not knowledgeable (15.2% PP, 9.4% P). Paraprofessionals were less successful on complex questions (44.3% PP, 59% P), and handled more questions which took 0-2 minutes to complete (40.2% PP, 33.6% P).

The overall result was that four out of the twenty libraries using paraprofessionals used them very successfully. The reasons given were that they handled less complex questions and were more apt to consult with a professional staff member.

A publisher-conducted survey⁷ with a response rate of less than 10% determined that there is an increasing acceptance of CD-ROM by law librarians. Eighty-eight percent reported offering CD-ROM technology, 43% reported a shift to primarily online sources, while 17% reported a shift from online to CD. Seventy-six percent of the respondents felt that there would never be a "bookless" library. This study suffered from a problem of self-selection.

Another self-selected survey was looked at which pertained to using the Internet for reference.⁸ I did not find any of the data to be useful for my study, but it did contain a good

7. Norman Desmarais, "Law Librarians Cite Increasing Acceptance of CD-ROM," *CD-ROM Professional* 7 (November/December 1994): 148-9.

8. Sharyn J. Ladner and Hope N. Tillman, "Using the Internet for Reference," *Online* 17 (January 1993): 45-49.

definition of reference service: the provision of information upon request, independent of forum or medium.

My review of the literature led me to the conclusion that there is a great need for information concerning the reference patterns of law libraries, especially ones funded by the public. I hope that this study will provide some data that other libraries can use when they make their purchase or staffing decisions. I believed that this study was necessary due to the recent explosion of non-book legal resources, along with declining funds for staff and the purchase of those resources. A library must know what to spend its money on, whether it be for traditional resources such as books or periodicals, newer ones such as CD-Roms, computers to access Internet and online materials, or staff members to facilitate the delivery of these resources to the patron.

METHODOLOGY

All questions that the Library answered for the time period April 1995 - September 1995, as recorded on a Cleveland Law Library "service request" form (Appendix I) , were collated. In addition, every reference question was analyzed for its content.

New data did not have to be collected for this study. All data used was ex-post facto data compiled by staff members during the course of their regular duties. The number of requests looked at was 5,052. The information extracted from the already filled-out service request forms was: the type of staff member (professional / paraprofessional), type of patron (large/small firms, sole practitioners, corporate, court/government), type of question, time to complete the request, sources utilized, and disposition of request. Each sheet was looked at individually in order to record the information. Another determination made was the frequency in which errors or mistakes were committed, based on information included on the reference request sheets. As stated previously in the definition of terms, a "technical mistake" was recorded when a staff member chose to answer a question without the requisite skills or knowledge to answer the question successfully. This was determined, albeit subjectively, by taking into account three years of personal observation of the staff member, and the staff member's training and experience in the law library field. A "judgment mistake" is one where the staff member should have the skills to answer a question successfully (either by having successfully answered similar questions previously, or by having been trained in the proper procedures), but chose a less effective strategy to arrive at the answer. This was determined by taking into account the amount of time the staff member spent on the question and the sources employed. This is also a somewhat

subjective measure.

Initially, a small sample was looked at (40 items). It was determined that this study, as described, could be accomplished. The sample showed that at least twenty percent of the items were capable of being analyzed for content. The actual figure turned out to be 59% (2949 out of 5052). The other 41% were of the single source / no research variety. Far from being upsetting, aside from adding to the workload, the higher number of questions analyzed contributed to the overall reliability of the study. As it turned out, the 41% of questions that did not require research were also analyzed to find out the referral patterns of the professional staff. The tallies from these questions were also used in figuring out the percentages for the final statistical totals.

I created three coding sheets based on personal observation, the review of literature, and the sample survey described above. Each one was used for a different type of question, and then divided again into responses for paraprofessionals and professional (see Apps. II, IIa, and IIb).

I used the coding sheets to record and evaluate the information from the library's reference request sheets. These coding sheets were not seen by any patron or staff member.

Data was analyzed to determine if correlations existed between the type of staff member and either sources used or time taken to answer a question. A new reference interview form was created based on the results taken from questions about mistake type, question type, sources used, and disposition of request (see App. III).

As a final component, this study determined a percentage for usage of electronic reference sources at the reference desk. This information can be used in purchase decisions in the future, or to determine the fate of current subscriptions. It also identified areas that needed increased

training for staff members who are not utilizing the electronic resources effectively.

In the analysis of sources, the results should be used in helping to determine if some sources can be cancelled or if others can be expanded due to use/non-use, development of alternative media, or the interlibrary loan patterns of borrowing certain materials. Training deficiencies were also exposed by tracking the choice of reference tool. Additionally, the tracking of the types of patrons who utilize the library's services can assist in future acquisitions decision-making.

Permission to conduct this study has been granted by the director of the Cleveland Law Library, Jan Ryan Novak.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Hypotheses v. Actual Results

1. Twenty to thirty percent of questions are of such a nature that they should be handled exclusively by professional staff, perhaps only by the librarians who also possess JDs.

Result

The actual figure turned out to be 40.6%. This result was arrived at by taking the number of questions answered by professionals (2166), subtracting referrals or questions that should have been referred to paraprofessionals (583), adding paraprofessional questions that should have been referred to professionals (468), and dividing by the total number of questions (5052). Using the same formula, the number rises to 53.3% if questions designated as "reference" questions are separated from the total number of questions.

2. An additional 30% will require some type of professional staff intervention in order to disseminate correct information.

Result

The actual figure was 20.2%. This figure was taken by dividing the number of interventions (1025) by the total number of questions (5052). As with hypothesis number one, the number rose to 33% if reference only questions are used.

The figures using total questions (40.6% in hypothesis one and 20.2% in hypothesis two), while being off by about ten percent each, when added together total 60.8%.

This figure is equal to the predicted total percentage of the two hypotheses.

3. Thirty percent of the questions will be disposed of by using other media aside from the traditional "book".

Result

The actual figure was 36.8%. Using reference questions only, the figure is 47.5%. The former figure is the more accurate one for the library's use because of the vast number of document delivery requests that are handled.

4. In only 5% or less of the questions will an answer of "NO" be given without a referral to another source.

Result

The actual figure of 5.8% is very close to the predicted figure. The extra .8% represents only 40 out of 5052 questions. The figure for reference only is 7.5%. This higher figure is expected due to the increasing complexity of the questions, and the esoteric nature of some of the documents requested.

5. Although the larger law firms (50+ attorneys) have their own libraries in-house, they will still constitute better than 50% of the questions.

Result

The actual percentage of 34.8% was much lower than predicted. However, the numbers seem logical when broken down by question type. For questions requiring no research,

the figure is 47.4%, more in line with the prediction. The number dips to 25.7% with research only questions, which makes sense because the larger firms have their own library staffs which will handle most of their research in-house.

Results By Question Type

Single Source, No Research (Table I)

This type of question dealt with requests for material with known cites from local sources, and represents 41% of the total. This was not unexpected, as one of the goals of any library is to collect materials that others do not wish to purchase because of either low interest or prohibitive costs.

Books are still the dominant resource (78.3%), but compact disks are making inroads (10.2%). The Internet is not much of a factor because it is considered a research resource rather a "bookshelf" item. This reasoning will likely change in the next few years as more pertinent material becomes available on the Net, and the entire staff becomes competent users.

The number of professional interventions and referrals to professionals are low, as they should be with this type of question. Use of local sources dominate (86.9%), and if you add outside source referrals (7.9%), the number reaches 94.8%.

The number of NO answers (3.4%) is smaller than predicted. Most of these dispositions are the result of the patron deciding not to pursue a search any further after discovering the needed material was not held by the Cleveland Law Library.

The referral number that is striking is that 46.6% of these types of questions which were handled by professionals should have been referred to a paraprofessional. This represents a lot of wasted professional staff time and is something that should be looked at by the professional staff in determining where their time can best be utilized.

The mistakes encountered were negligible. The system mistakes were, for the most part, the 'book is checked out' type.

Research / One Source (Table II)

This type of question deals with requests for material concerning a certain subject or subjects, with the answer being found after consulting one library source. These questions represent 26% of the total. Large law firm use dipped to 30.5%, while smaller firm use rose to 42.4%. This is consistent with the fact that the larger firms have their own library staffs, while the smaller ones operate with one or two persons. In some cases, the smaller firms have nobody working in the library, if they have a library at all. Library collection size also differs greatly between the large and small firms.

There is a rather large difference in the sole practitioner / corporate patron area as between professionals and nonprofessionals (16.8% v. 7.2%). I believe this represents the personal relationships that have been established between the individual patron and the professional staff member.

Books are still the source of choice (44.8%), but other media are well represented, especially CDs (19.1%) and CALR (13.4%). The results show that paraprofessionals are using

CDs slightly more than professionals, which indicates that training is finally taking hold, along with staff members being more comfortable with the software search mechanisms. Microfiche, as a source, is on its deathbed (1.5%). It still remains a good media for archiving materials that cannot be accessed by other methods, or if shelf space is at a premium.

Local sources are still supplying most of the patrons' needs (82.4%). Coupled with referrals, the total jumps to 92.3%.

The number of NO responses is higher than predicted (7.6%). As with the "no research" questions, the reference request sheets show that patrons are terminating the request rather than go on with an outside source search. Some of these may actually have been outside source referrals, but not reflected on the request sheet as such.

The area that is of some concern is the figure of 35.4% of questions that should have been immediately referred by paraprofessionals to professionals, but weren't. A 31.3% mistake rate also shows that some paraprofessionals are attempting to answer questions that they either are not trained to answer (17.4%), or are taking too much time to answer (13.9%). This is not to say that these questions were answered incorrectly, just that they could have been handled more efficiently by being referred.

Research / Multiple Sources (Table III)

These questions represent 33% of the total, and are concerned with consulting multiple library sources of information to answer a subject related request. Large firm use dropped again, this time to 21.9%. Picking up the slack for this drop were smaller firms (slight increase) and

government (300% increase over one source research questions).

The source numbers represent each time a resource was used on a question. By definition, these questions are multi-source, so the percentages on Table III will add up to more than one hundred percent.

Books still lead the race with 58.6%, however, CDs jumped to 47.4%. An interesting result is that paraprofessionals used books 77% of the time while the professional total was only 44.1%. It is also pertinent that out of 660 questions that were referred or should have been referred by paraprofessionals, 29.5% of them wound up being researched with CALR, 36.3% on the Internet. While paraprofessionals do not perform CALR at the Cleveland Law Library, more Internet training seems to be warranted.

Local sources accounted for only 60.1% of dispositions. The Cleveland Law Library conducts a rather aggressive ILL policy, as the 14.8% figure indicates. The 7.3% NO figure is again higher than predicted, but I still believe a number of those are unrecorded outside source referrals.

The number of paraprofessional mistakes stayed consistent with the single source research totals, but there was a jump in the number of mistakes made by professionals. The percentages of professional mistakes (3.2%), however, were still below the predicted level.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The large firm numbers were smaller than predicted (Table V). The deficiency showed up in questions requiring research (Table VI). That was not entirely unsurprising given the fact that larger firms have in-house library staffs which handle the majority of research requests.

The numbers of Court/Government requests were very small (Table V), given the fact that the Cleveland Law Library is supposed to be the courts' library. This is more than likely due to the fact that in Cuyahoga County, each judge has law clerks available for research. The need for library assistance, other than the mere use of the library, is usually not required. The non-patron requests are all ILL requests received via OCLC's online ILL system (Table V).

There was nothing earth shattering discovered in the analysis of time taken to handle a question (Table V). The correlation discovered between time and which type of staff member handled a question was that paraprofessionals handled the majority of questions that were disposed of in fifteen minutes or less, while professionals handled the majority of questions that were answered in sixteen minutes or more. Again, that is not surprising because the professional staff member tends to work on the research questions that require more time to answer (Table VI). The time factor was used in determining whether a paraprofessional staff member chose the proper research strategy with regard to the research questions. Anything longer than fifteen minutes was usually indicative of a judgment mistake.

The results in the area of source choice were as predicted (Table V). Book usage should probably be closely tracked in the future to determine if it falls during the next year. Usage of the Internet, CDs, and CALR will probably continue to make inroads into book usage

percentages.

The disposition rate showed successes 94.2% of the time (Table V). ILLs will increase even more in the future, which will take the NO and outside source referrals numbers down in an inverse relationship.

The mistake rates were low (Table V). I did not hypothesize in this area, but higher numbers were expected. Increased training and feedback from the use of the new reference request sheets should make the mistake rates drop in the future.

Overall, the data show that electronic resource use is definitely on the rise. In analyzing 2,949 reference questions, books were consulted only 52.5% of the time (Table VI). This figure should continue to move downward as staff members become even more familiar with electronic resources and use them in the first instance, instead of as a backup when answers cannot be found in the books.

The gap between professional and paraprofessional does not seem to be that wide until you get to the area of multiple resource reference. The distinction drawn between the two categories for this study was the professional having the MLS, and the position. In reality, the person with the most experience will probably be more efficient, degrees notwithstanding. In the situation at the Cleveland Law Library, the professionals also have the most experience. If the Cleveland Law Library takes just one positive thing away from this study, it will be that the paraprofessionals are providing quality work. By instituting a stronger training program, the gap between professional and paraprofessional will lessen. This will benefit the library's patrons in the long run, free up some professional staff time for projects and teaching, and make for a more cohesive, efficient staff.

APPENDIX I

LAW LIBRARY SERVICE REQUEST

NAME: _____ FIRM: _____

PHONE #: _____ DATE: _____ STAFF: _____ TIME: _____

REQUEST

STATUS

STATUS CODES

B = BORROWED
C = COPIED
F = FAXED
V = VERIFIED

NR = NOT IN COLLECTION, REFERRAL TO VERIFIED SOURCE

NU = NOT IN COLLECTION, REFERRAL TO UNVERIFIED
SOURCE

NO = NOT IN COLLECTION, NO REFERRAL

R = IN CIRCULATION, NO RESERVE TAKEN

LL = INTERLIBRARY LOAN

8/8

APPENDIX II

Single Source / No Research

Paraprofessional

Patron

Large
Other firm
Sole
Corp
Court/Govt

Time

1-5
6-15
16-30
31-60 61+

Source

Book
Internet
CD
CALR
Fiche
Other databases

Intervention ?

Should have referred to PR ?

Referred ?

Disposition ?

Local sources
ILL
Outside source referral
NO

Mistake ?

Technical
Judgment
System

Professional

Patron

Large
Other firm
Sole
Corp
Court/Govt
Non Patron

Time

1-5
6-15
16-30
31-60 61+

Source

Book
Internet
CD
CALR
Fiche
Other databases

Should have been referred to PA ?

Referred ?

Disposition ?

Local sources
ILL
Outside source referral
NO

Mistake

Technical
Judgment
System

APPENDIX IIa
Research / 1 source

Paraprofessional

Patron

Large

Other firm

Sole

Corp

Court/Govt

Time

1-5

6-15

16-30

31-60 61+

Source

Book

Internet

CD

CALR

Fiche

Other databases

Intervention ?

Should have referred to PR ?

Referred ?

Disposition ?

Local sources

ILL

Outside source referral

NO

Mistake ?

Technical

Judgment

System

Professional

Patron

Large

Other firm

Sole

Corp

Court/Govt

Time

1-5

6-15

16-30

31-60 61+

Source

Book

Internet

CD

CALR

Fiche

Other databases

Should have been referred to PA ?

Referred ?

Referred Up ?

Should have referred up ?

Disposition ?

Local sources

ILL

Outside source referral

NO

Mistake

Technical

Judgment

System

APPENDIX IIb Research/Multiple Sources

Paraprofessional

Patron

Large
Other firm
Sole
Corp
Court/Govt

Time

1-5
6-15
16-30
31-60 61+

Source

Book
Internet
CD
CALR
Fiche
Other databases

Intervention ?

Should have referred to PR ?

Referred ?

Disposition ?

Local sources
ILL
Outside source referral
NO

Mistake ?

Technical
Judgment
System

Professional

Patron

Large
Other firm
Sole
Corp
Court/Govt

Time

1-5
6-15
16-30
31-60 61+

Source

Book
Internet
CD
CALR
Fiche
Other databases

Should have been referred to PA ?

Referred ?

Referred Up ?

Should have referred up ?

Disposition ?

Local sources
ILL
Outside source referral
NO

Mistake

Technical
Judgment
System

APPENDIX III

LAW LIBRARY SERVICE REQUEST

Patron: _____ Date: _____
Firm: _____ Staff: _____ Time: _____
Phone: _____ Staff: _____ Time: _____
Fax: _____ Staff: _____ Time: _____

REQUEST:

DISPOSITION: _____

RESOURCES USED:

Catalog _____ Internet _____ CD _____ Microform _____ Book _____ Lexis _____ Westlaw _____

Other Online _____

DISPOSITION CODES:

B: Borrowed C: Copied F: Faxed V: Verified NR: Not in collection / Referred to verified source

R: In Circulation / No Reserve Taken NO: Not in Collection / No Referral

TABLE EXPLANATORY DATA

For Tables I-IV:

- No. = Number of questions answered out of the number at the top of the column (either paraprofessional or professional).
- %PA, %PR = Percentage of the number of questions answered out of the number at the top of either the paraprofessional (PA) or professional (PR) columns.
- %T = Percentage that the number of questions answered represents out of the total number of questions listed in the tables's title.
- Tot. = Total number of questions (paraprofessional and professional) per category subtype (e.g. Patron / Large)
- % = Percentage that the total number of questions answered per subtype represents.

For Tables V-VI:

- No. = Number of questions answered out of the number in the table title.
- % = Percentage among the category type that the number of questions answered represents.
- %PA, %PR = Percentage of questions of the subtype handled by either the paraprofessional or the professional.

TABLE I

SINGLE SOURCE / NO RESEARCH (2103 QUESTIONS)

PARAPROFESSIONALS (1446 QUESTIONS)

<u>Patron</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%PA</u>	<u>%T</u>
Large	738	51	35.1
Other firm	408	28.2	19.4
Sole	210	14.5	10
Corp	54	3.7	2.6
Court/Govt	36	2.5	1.7

<u>Time</u>			
1-5	843	58.3	40.1
6-15	465	32.2	22.1
16-30	114	7.9	5.4
31-60	15	1	.7
61+	9	.6	.4

<u>Source</u>			
Book	1185	82	56.3
Internet	0	0	0
CD	132	9.1	6.3
CALR	3	.2	.01
Fiche	30	2.1	1.4
Other databases	96	6.6	4.6

Intervention ? 45 3.1

Should have referred to PR ?

33 2.3

Referred ? 39 2.7

Disposition ?

Local sources	1323	91.5	62.9
ILL	3	.2	.1
Outside source referral	68	4.7	3.2
NO	52	3.6	2.5

Mistake ?

Technical	9	.6	.4
Judgment	9	.6	.4
System	36	2.5	1.7

PROFESSIONALS (657 QUESTIONS)

<u>Patron</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%PR</u>	<u>%T</u>	<u>Tot.</u>	<u>%</u>
Large	258	39.3	12.3	996	47.4
Other firm	108	16.4	5.1	516	24.5
Sole	96	14.6	4.6	306	14.6
Corp	60	9.1	2.9	114	5.4
Court/Govt	12	1.8	.6	48	2.3
Non Patron	123	18.7	5.8	123	5.8

<u>Time</u>					
1-5	183	27.9	8.7	1026	48.8
6-15	279	42.5	13.3	744	35.4
16-30	184	28	8.7	298	14.2
31-60	6	.9	.3	21	.09
61+	5	.8	.2	14	.06

<u>Source</u>					
Book	461	70.2	21.9	1646	78.3
Internet	43	6.5	2	43	2
CD	82	12.5	3.9	214	10.2
CALR	17	2.6	.8	20	1
Fiche	14	2.1	.7	44	2
Other databases	40	6.1	1.9	136	6.5

Should have been referred to PA ?

306 46.6

Referred ? 141 21.5

Disposition ?

Local sources	505	76.9	24	1828	86.9
ILL	33	5	1.6	36	1.7
Outside source referral	99	15.1	4.7	167	7.9
NO	20	3	1	72	3.4

Mistake

Technical	0	0	0	9	.4
Judgment	3	.5	.1	12	.6
System	3	.5	.1	39	1.9

T-1

TABLE II
ONE SOURCE / RESEARCH (1310 QUESTIONS)

PARAPROFESSIONALS (720 QUESTIONS)

<u>Patron</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%PA</u>	<u>%T</u>
Large	265	36.8	20.2
Other firm	335	46.5	25.6
Sole	25	3.5	1.9
Corp	70	9.7	5.3
Court/Govt	25	3.5	1.9

<u>Time</u>			
1-5	160	22.2	12.2
6-15	300	41.7	22.9
16-30	245	34	18.7
31-60	15	2.1	1.1
61+	0	0	0

<u>Source</u>			
Book	360	50	27.5
Internet	30	4.2	2.3
CD	140	19.4	10.7
CALR	35	4.9	2.7
Fiche	12	1.7	.9
Other databases	143	19.9	10.9

Intervention ? 485 67.4

Should have referred to PR ?

255 35.4

Referred ? 450 62.5

Disposition ?

Local sources	565	78.5	43.1
ILL	0	0	0
Outside source referral	95	13.2	7.3
NO	60	8.3	4.6

Mistake ?

Technical	125	17.4	9.5
Judgment	100	13.9	7.6
System	0	0	0

PROFESSIONALS (590 QUESTIONS)

<u>Patron</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%PR</u>	<u>%T</u>	<u>Tot.</u>	<u>%</u>
Large	135	22.9	10.3	400	30.5
Other firm	220	37.3	16.8	555	42.4
Sole	165	28	12.6	190	14.5
Corp	55	9.3	4.2	125	9.5
Court/Govt	15	2.5	1.1	40	3.1

<u>Time</u>					
1-5	65	11	5	225	17.2
6-15	306	51.9	23.4	606	46.3
16-30	179	30.3	13.7	424	32.4
31-60	30	5.1	2.3	45	3.4
61+	10	1.7	.8	10	.8

<u>Source</u>					
Book	227	38.5	17.3	587	44.8
Internet	45	7.6	3.4	75	5.7
CD	110	18.6	8.4	250	19.1
CALR	140	23.7	10.7	175	13.4
Fiche	7	1.2	.5	19	1.5
Other databases	61	10.3	4.7	204	15.6

Should have been referred to PA ?

20 3.4

Referred ? 85 14.4

Disposition ?

Local sources	515	87.3	39.3	1080	82.4
ILL	0	0	0	0	0
Outside source referral	35	5.9	2.7	130	9.9
NO	40	6.8	3.1	100	7.6

Mistake

Technical	3	.5	.2	128	9.8
Judgment	7	1.2	.5	107	8.2
System	10	1.7	.8	10	.8

TABLE III
MULTIPLE SOURCES / RESEARCH (1639 QUESTIONS)

PARAPROFESSIONALS (720 QUESTIONS)

<u>Patron</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%PA</u>	<u>%T</u>
Large	195	27.1	11.9
Other firm	390	54.2	23.8
Sole	60	8.3	3.7
Corp	30	4.2	1.8
Court/Govt	45	6.3	2.7

<u>Time</u>			
1-5	30	4.2	1.8
6-15	210	29.2	12.8
16-30	300	41.7	18.3
31-60	135	18.8	8.2
61+	45	6.3	2.7

<u>Source</u>			
Book	555	77.1	33.9
Internet	240	33.3	14.6
CD	450	62.5	27.5
CALR	195	27.1	11.9
Fiche	0	0	0
Other databases	510	70.8	31.1

Intervention ? 495 68.8

Should have referred to PR ?

180 25

Referred ? 480 66.7

Disposition ?

Local sources	510	70.8	31.1
ILL	0	0	0
Outside source referral	120	16.7	7.3
NO	90	12.5	5.5

Mistake ?

Technical	120	16.7	7.3
Judgment	90	12.5	5.5
System	0	0	0

PROFESSIONALS (919 QUESTIONS)

<u>Patron</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%PR</u>	<u>%T</u>	<u>Tot.</u>	<u>%</u>
Large	164	17.8	10	359	21.9
Other firm	362	39.4	22.1	752	45.9
Sole	153	16.6	9.3	213	13
Corp	130	14.1	7.9	160	9.8
Court/Govt	110	12	6.7	155	9.5

<u>Time</u>					
1-5	60	6.5	3.7	90	5.5
6-15	144	15.7	8.8	354	21.6
16-30	475	51.7	29	775	47.3
31-60	135	14.7	8.2	270	16.5
61+	105	11.4	6.4	150	9.2

<u>Source</u>					
Book	405	44.1	24.7	960	58.6
Internet	390	42.4	23.8	630	38.4
CD	330	35.9	20.1	780	47.6
CALR	330	35.9	20.1	525	32
Fiche	32	3.5	2	32	2
Other databases	732	79.7	44.7	1242	75.8

Should have been referred to PA ?

0 0

Referred to PA ? 30 3.3

Referred Up? 60 6.5

Should have referred up?

30 3.3

Disposition ?

Local sources	475	51.7	29	985	60.1
ILL	243	26.4	14.8	243	14.8
Outside source referral	171	18.6	10.4	291	17.8
NO	30	3.3	1.8	120	7.3

Mistake

Technical	13	1.4	.8	133	8.1
Judgment	17	1.8	1.1	107	6.5
System	0	0	0	0	0

T-3

TABLE IV

TOTAL QUESTIONS REGARDLESS OF TYPE (5052 QUESTIONS)

PARAPROFESSIONALS (2886 QUESTIONS)

<u>Patron</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%PA</u>	<u>%T</u>
Large	1198	41.5	23.7
Other firm	1133	39.3	22.4
Sole	295	10.2	5.8
Corp	154	5.3	3.0
Court/Govt	106	3.7	2.1

<u>Time</u>			
1-5	1033	35.8	20.4
6-15	975	33.8	19.3
16-30	659	22.8	13
31-60	165	5.7	3.3
61+	54	1.9	1.1

<u>Source</u>			
Book	2100	72.8	41.6
Internet	270	9.4	5.3
CD	722	25	14.3
CALR	233	8.1	4.6
Fiche	42	1.5	.8
Other databases	749	26	14.8

Intervention ? 1025 35.5

Should have referred to PR ?

468 16.2

Referred ? 969 33.6

Disposition ?

Local sources	2398	83.1	47.5
ILL	3	.1	.1
Outside source referral	283	9.8	5.6
NO	202	7.0	4.0

Mistake ?

Technical	254	8.8	.5
Judgment	199	6.9	3.9
System	36	1.2	.7

PROFESSIONALS (2166 QUESTIONS)

<u>Patron</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%PR</u>	<u>%T</u>
Large	558	25.8	11
Other firm	690	31.9	13.7
Sole	414	19.1	8.2
Corp	245	11.3	4.8
Court/Govt	127	5.9	2.5
Non-Patron	123	5.7	2.4

<u>Time</u>			
1-5	308	14.2	6.1
6-15	729	33.7	14.4
16-30	838	38.7	16.6
31-60	171	7.9	3.4
61+	120	5.5	2.4

<u>Source</u>			
Book	1093	50.5	21.6
Internet	478	22.1	9.5
CD	522	24.1	10.3
CALR	487	22.5	9.6
Fiche	53	2.4	1
Other databases	833	38.5	16.5

Should have been referred to PA ?

326 15.1

Referred to PA ? 257 11.9

Referred Up? 95 4.4

Should have referred up?

40 1.8

Disposition ?

Local sources	1495	69	29.6
ILL	276	12.7	5.5
Outside source referral	305	14.1	6
NO	90	4.2	1.8

Mistake

Technical	16	.7	.3
Judgment	27	1.2	.5
System	13	.6	.3

TABLE V

TOTAL COMBINED QUESTIONS REGARDLESS OF TYPE (5052 QUESTIONS)

<u>Patron</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%PA</u>	<u>%PR</u>
Large	1756	34.8	68.2	31.8
Other firm	1823	36.1	62.2	37.8
Sole	709	14.2	41.6	58.4
Corp	399	7.9	38.6	61.4
Court/Govt	233	4.6	45.5	54.5
Non-Patron	123	2.4	0	100
<u>Time</u>				
1-5	1341	26.5	77	23
6-15	1704	33.8	57.2	42.8
16-30	1497	29.6	44	56
31-60	336	6.7	59.1	40.9
61+	174	3.4	31	69
<u>Source</u>				
Book	3193	63.2	65.8	34.2
Internet	748	14.8	36.1	63.9
CD	1244	24.6	58	42
CALR	720	14.3	32.4	67.3
Fiche	95	1.9	44.2	55.8
Other databases	1582	31.3	47.3	52.7
<u>Disposition ?</u>				
Local sources	3893	77.1	61.6	38.4
ILL	279	5.5	.011	99.989
Outside source				
referral	588	11.6	48.1	51.9
NO	292	5.8	69.2	30.8
<u>Mistake ?</u>				
Technical	270	5.3	94.1	5.9
Judgment	228	4.5	87.3	12.7
System	49	.96	73.5	26.6

TABLE VI

TOTAL COMBINED RESEARCH QUESTIONS (2949 QUESTIONS)

<u>Patron</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%PA</u>	<u>%PR</u>
Large	759	25.7	60.6	39.4
Other firm	1307	44.3	55.5	44.5
Sole	403	13.7	21.1	78.9
Corp	285	9.7	35.1	64.9
Court/Govt	195	6.6	35.9	64.1
<u>Time</u>				
1-5	315	10.7	60.3	39.7
6-15	960	32.6	53.1	46.9
16-30	1199	40.7	45.4	54.5
31-60	315	10.7	47.6	52.4
61+	160	5.4	28.1	71.9
<u>Source</u>				
Book	1547	52.5	59.1	40.9
Internet	705	23.9	38.3	61.7
CD	1030	34.9	57.3	42.7
CALR	700	23.7	32.9	67.1
Fiche	51	1.7	23.5	76.5
Other databases	1446	49	45.2	54.8
<u>Disposition ?</u>				
Local sources	2065	70	52.1	47.9
ILL	243	8.2	0	100
Outside source referral	421	14.3	51.1	48.9
NO	220	7.5	68.2	31.8
<u>Mistake ?</u>				
Technical	261	8.9	93.9	6.1
Judgment	214	7.3	88.8	11.2
System	10	.3	0	100